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Fine Chinese Ceramics & Works of Art
Sale N08659

AUCTION DATE
Session 2 15 Sep 10 2:00 PM

LOCATION
New York

LOT 367



PROPERTY FROM A PRIVATE COLLECTION
**AN IMPORTANT IMPERIAL PAINTING FROM THE SET OF SEVENTEEN
PAINTINGS COMMEMORATING THE VICTORIES OF THE MUSLIM
REBELLION IN THE NORTHWEST BY QINGKUAN (FL. LATE 19TH C.) ET AL
QING DYNASTY, GUANGXU PERIOD**

120,000—150,000 USD **Lot
Sold.** Hammer Price with Buyer's
Premium: 992,500 USD

MEASUREMENTS
measurements note
117 by 52 1/4 in., 297.5 by 133 cm

DESCRIPTION

ink and color on silk
one painting from a series of seventeen, depicting the siege and storming of a fortified city in one of the northwestern provinces by the Imperial army led by the generals Cao Kezhong, Chen Ketai and Lei Zhengwan against the Muslim rebel forces, using ladders to scale the walls, breaching the Muslim defences and allowing attackers to flood through the main city gates, the main assault forces attacking from opposite sides, the Imperial army wearing brightly colored blue and red military garments, many of them identified in accompanying cartouches, the cavalry on finely painted horses, all armed with swords, spears, muskets, bows and arrows, the Muslim rebels wearing simple cream-colored outfits and distinctive white turbans

PROVENANCE

Auktionshaus Lempertz, Cologne, 3rd December 1958, lot 807.

CATALOGUE NOTE

This large-scale battle scene most likely belongs to a set of seventeen paintings commemorating victorious battles between the Qing Imperial Army and the Muslim rebels in the northwestern regions between 1862 and 1877. This painting vividly illustrates how the Qing forces laid siege to a Muslim-occupied city. Titles and full-size cartouches for the entire series are recorded among documents preserved in the Chinese First Historical Archives, Beijing. 'Pingliangfu', the fourth painting in this series may relate to the battle scene illustrated in this painting as historical accounts of the siege of Piangliangfu recount how the Imperial forces used ladders to scale the city walls while an ambush was laid outside the city to trap escaping Muslim rebels. As documented in the historical sources, the Imperial forces were commanded on the right hand side of the painting by Zhang Zhan'ao, Lu Shi, Zhang Jishang and Zheng Quanzhong, while the Imperial forces on the left were commanded by Cao Kezhong, with the stalwart Wang Desheng leading the charge through the city gate. At the same time outside the city walls, an ambush was laid by the Imperial troops commanded by Lei Zhengwan and Chen Kaitai, and those units led by Liu Xiaozhong to trap the escaping defenders.

Only a small number of paintings from the series of the Muslim Rebellion in the Northwest is known. Among them is the third painting in the series, depicting the 'Battle at the Wei River', now in the Royal Collection at Sandringham House, Norfolk, United Kingdom, illustrated in Hongxing Zhang, 'Studies in Late Qing Dynasty Battle Paintings', *Artibus Asiae*, vol. LX, no. 2, fig. 4.

According to Hongxing Zhang, *ibid.*, in 1885 the Guangxu emperor initiated a painting project to commemorate the government victory over the three major rebellions of the nineteenth century, the Taiping Rebellion, the Nian Rebellion and the Muslim Rebellions. Qingkuan (1848-1927), Director of the Three Agencies in the *Neiwufu* (Imperial Household Department), was appointed as director of this major imperial art project. A total of sixty-seven paintings were created, comprising of twenty for the Taiping War, eighteen for the Nian Rebellion, twelve for the Muslim rebellion in Yunnan and Guizhou, and seventeen for the Muslim rebellion in the northwestern regions. The project was completed in 1890 and the paintings were displayed in the Ziguangge ('Hall of Purple Splendour'), located west of the Forbidden City in Beijing, where under the Qianlong emperor, banners and portraits of meritorious officers as well as battle scenes were shown.

Of the original set of sixty-seven paintings, only few have survived. The only complete set of twelve paintings depicting scenes of the Muslim Rebellion in Yunnan and Guizhou are in the Palace Museum in Beijing, of which only one is published, see Hongxing Zhang, *op.cit.*, fig. 5. Three other paintings from the series commemorating victorious battle scenes between the Imperial army and the forces of the Taiping Heavenly Army are known, one sold at Christie's London, 22nd April 1991, lot 101, two in our Hong Kong rooms, 9th October 2007, lot 1312, and 8th October 2009, lot 1660.